GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ATOMIC ENERGY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3952
ANSWERED ON:20.04.2005
EXPLOITATION OF ATOMIC GRADE MATERIALS
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Will the Minister of ATOMIC ENERGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether rare earth materials on the shores of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala are illegally mined and smuggled by small timers;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether apart from local individuals, some private companies are also involved in the commercial exploitation of atomic grade materials;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the measures taken by the Government to check exploitation of such materials from the national security point of view?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER`S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN):
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(a) & (b) Only One instance of illegal mining was identified in the coast of Tamil Nadu. However, in this case the penalty levied by the Collector has been stayed by the Hon'ble High Court, Madras.

(c) & (d) Till 6.10.1998 mining/mineral separation for atomic minerals was reserved for the public sector. After the announcement of the revised Policy on Beach Sand Minerals on 6.10.1998, a few partnership firms and private companies, mostly erstwhile Garnet producers from the State of Tamil Nadu have entered the field of beach sand mining/minerals separation.

e) For mining and handling prescribed substances found in the coast, besides a mining lease from the State Government concerned, a licence from the Department of Atomic Energy under the Atomic Energy (Working of Mines, Minerals and Handling of Prescribed Substances) Rules, 1984 is required. Further, the export of heavy minerals is allowed only after certification by the Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration & Research (AMD), regarding the presence of Monazite content of less than 0.25%. When Monazite is produced in the process of exploitation, their disposal is done as per the directions of the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board. Therefore adequate safeguards exist from the National Security point of view.